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ABSTRACT

Two studies are reported which represent an attempt at operationalizing the first step of a seven-step strategy for validating reading-teacher competencies. That step is to develop a procedure whereby the profession might identify the components of reading maturity at various levels. The paper discusses and explores the following three assumptions which underlie the first step and on which the viability of the model depends: (1) agreement among groups of reading educators is possible; (2) pupil outcomes can be identified which are acceptable to reading educators; (3) once identified, these outcomes can be ordered as to their saliency at various reading levels. In the first study, 13 reading professors at a midwestern university were polled. Twelve pupil outcomes were generally accepted and ranked with the broad areas of attitude and comprehension considered most important to reading maturity as pupils exit from elementary school. When primary and intermediate reading teachers were polled, they too accepted the 12 pupil outcomes, were able to rank these outcomes, and were in general agreement within their subgroup. However, elementary teachers ranked decoding skills as most important. (MKM)

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Toward Validating Reading Teacher Competencies

TEACHER EDUCATION FORUM

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TEACHER EDUCATION FORUM

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Competency-based teacher education programs are currently being designed and developed. Lacking a research foundation which associates teacher behavior patterns with dimensions of pupil growth, competency-based program developers must use intuition and professional consensus for determining which competencies to include in their program. Two exploratory studies were conducted to test the viability of an empirically based procedure for the validation of reading teacher competencies. Results from both studies were supportive of the procedure. The research reported provides a viable set of procedures for involvement by various groups of reading educators in operationalizing definitions of reading maturity and for continuing the active pursuit of research focused upon the validation of reading teacher competencies.

Research studies attempting to identify key variables in reading instruction have repeatedly reached the conclusion that it is the teacher, not the instructional approach, material or grouping pattern used, which most clearly accounts for the variance in reading progress among children (Artley, 1969; Austin and Morrison, 1963; Bond and Dykstra, 1967; Harris, 1969, etc.). Despite the apparently significant relationship between the "teacher variable" and good reading instruction, few research studies explore which specific teacher behaviors, or competencies, contribute most to optimum pupil performance in reading.

Lacking such basic information about teacher competencies and related pupil behaviors, it seems premature that competency-based programs designed to prepare teachers of reading are being developed. Clearly anyone who has engaged in such an adventure must agree with Turner (1973) that competency-based programs are typically composed of sets of competencies which represent the "best guesses" of experts. Without basic research designed to validate competencies, educators have, quite frankly, little else to build upon.

To provide the kind of research base needed to validate competencies in the area of teaching reading, we propose that a series of interrelated explorations be undertaken. The blueprint for this series of studies builds upon the ideas of Artley (1969) and specifies a research strategy by which the profession might empirically validate competencies in the teaching of reading.

Step 1: Develop a procedure whereby the profession might identify the components of what is meant by reading maturity at various levels, i.e., primary grade level, intermediate grade level, etc.

Step 2: Once the components of reading maturity are defined, identify means by which such behaviors will be measured.

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Step 3: Identify teachers who are successful and less successful in helping children grow in reading maturity as defined and measured in Steps One and Two.

Step 4: Ascertain teacher behaviors which appear to distinguish successful from less successful teachers of reading.

Step 5: Through experimentation, determine the relationship between each behavior and pupil growth toward reading maturity.

Step 6: Use the information provided in Steps One through Five to improve the program of teacher education in reading by developing teacher training materials which attempt to prepare teachers in these competencies.

Step 7: Validate these training materials using as criteria the intersect of teacher performance and pupil learning.

The studies which are reported here represent an attempt at operationalizing the first step of this overall strategy for validating reading teacher competencies. Specifically this paper discusses and explores three assumptions which underlie the first step and upon which the viability of the model depends: (1) that agreement among groups of reading educators is possible; (2) that pupil outcomes can be identified which are acceptable to reading educators as definitions of reading maturity; and (3) that once identified, these pupil outcomes can be ordered as to their saliency at various reading levels.

METHOD-STUDY ONE

Subjects

All reading program faculty members (N=13) at a major midwestern university were surveyed in January 1974.

Materials and Procedures

Pupil outcomes in the area of reading were sent to each reading faculty member. Faculty members were asked to read each of the 12 pupil outcomes (each was typed on a 3 x 5 card) and sort them into categories of importance, placing four cards in each of three categories ("most importance," "average importance," and "least importance"). To aid participants in sorting, three frames were included. When participants had completed this task, they were asked to transcribe their decisions onto a summary sheet and return the package to the investigators.

Pupil outcomes used are those which follow, and represent outcomes identified by the Center for the Study of Evaluation (an educational research and development center funded under ESEA) as it functioned in its role as a clearinghouse on school evaluation (Hoepfner, Bradley, Klein and Alkin, 1972).

Attitude and Behavior Modification From Reading: Selects different types of reading materials according to purposes. Reads newspapers and other sources of information. Seeks

out certain types of materials to get specific information, and as an aid to study. Is able to change behavior, feelings, and opinions as a result of knowledge gained through reading.

Attitude Toward Reading: Reads various types of literature in spare time for personal enjoyment. Reads to improve understanding of mankind. Enjoys the various ways in which literature presents ideas (poetry, fiction, etc.). Understands the help reading offers to improving vocabulary, speaking, and writing abilities. Likes to read.

Critical Reading: Recognizes intentions of author and purpose of the writing. Can decide on the basis of logic and judgment the quality of the writing. Can tell fact from fiction and one type of literature from another (fairy tales, true stories, etc.). Can recognize writing that encourages one point of view over any other or that does not make logical sense. Can tell the difference between fact, opinion, guesses, and statements of feelings.

Inference Making from Selected Selections: Correctly interprets what is read. Recognizes from the materials what kinds of characters are being talked about. Can tell that the characters in a story are sad or happy, trustworthy or untrustowrthy, etc. Can tell why characters act as they do.

Oral Reading: Reads aloud with correct feeling and meaning. Reads clearly and smoothly. Uses expression in reading aloud. Reads words correctly. Understands what is being read.

Phonetic Recognition: Can identify the sounds of letters (phonetics). Can sound-out words when sounds correspond to spelling. Uses the sounding-out of letters and words (phonics) as a reading tool.

Recognition of Literary Devices: Recognizes basic figures of speech such as metaphors (seeing one thing in terms of another: "The hummingbird is a flying jewel"); symbols (things that stand for something else, as the dove stands for peace); irony (results opposite to intentions: In getting his wish for gold, King Midas also turned his daughter into gold); exaggeration (making a thing seem more or less significant than it is: "I was so scared, I jumped a mile!").

Recognition of Word Meanings: Has a good vocabulary. Recognizes the meanings of words by the way they are used. Recognizes words by looking at common beginnings and endings. Recognizes words that mean the same thing, opposite things, and words that sound alike but mean different things. Uses logic in trying to understand the meaning of words.

Remembering Information Read: Recalls main ideas and the details and events in the order in which they appeared in the reading.

Silent Reading Efficiency: Selects reading speed to meet need (understanding as a whole, to remember all or part, or to remember specific facts in the material).

Structural Recognition: Recognizes word roots, common beginnings and endings (pre- and -ing), syllables, plurals, and word combinations (contractions such as isn't, haven't, aren't).

Understanding Ideational Complexes (Reading Comprehension): Understands both the main ideas and the details that support the ideas of reading selections. Can state the ideas in different words. Understands the message presented in the reading.

RESULTS-STUDY ONE

Usable responses were received from all faculty members polled. Ten of the thirteen faculty completed the task as per the directions. Two questionnaires were completed in a manner other than that requested. The results of these questionnaires will be reported below in the section entitled Acceptability. One questionnaire, while completed in the general manner suggested, rated seven pupil outcomes as "most important." The results of this questionnaire will be reported in the section entitled Saliency.

Agreement

In order to determine the degree of agreement among the rankings received from the reading faculty members, Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (W) was computed. Table I reports the results of this computation. The size of concordance indicates that there is high agreement among these reading faculty members in their ranking of the twelve pupil outcomes. The significance of the coefficient of concordance was tested and found to be significant beyond the .01 level (M=10 and N=12).

Acceptability

Responses received indicate that the pupil outcomes given were, for the most part, acceptable as written. Faculty members were given an opportunity to suggest additional goals or outcomes which should be considered. Responses to this question varied from those suggesting an extension or modification of one or more outcomes, to those who expressed much broader areas of concern. All responses received are given below. Items 1 and 2 are those made by faculty not completing the questionnaire in the manner requested by the investigators. Items 3 and 4 are those comments which were received on questionnaires which were completed in the manner suggested by the investigators.

(1) "It is impossible to rank competencies as all are needed and should be important at various times throughout the reading program."

(2) "While competencies are important, the constellation of competencies, or what I call 'total reading behavior' ought to be the focus and not smaller units."

TABLE 1

Calculation of the Coefficient of Concordance, the Data Consisting of the Ranking of Twleve Pupil Outcomes in Reading by Ten Professors of Reading

(1) PUPIL OUTCOMES IN READING	(2) PROFESSOR'S RANKS										(3) SUM OF RANKS	(4) D	(5) D^2
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
Attitude and Behavior Modification from Reading	2.5	6.5	10.5	2.5	6.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	41	24	576
Attitude Toward Reading	2.5	10.5	6.5	2.5	2.5	6.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	41	24	576
Critical Reading	2.5	2.5	6.5	2.5	6.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	33	32	1024
Inference Making From Reading Selections	6.5	6.5	2.5	6.5	2.5	2.5	6.5	2.5	2.5	6.5	45	20	400
Oral Reading	10.5	10.5	6.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	101	36	1296
Phonetic Recognition	10.5	2.5	2.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	77	12	144
Recognition of Literary Devices	10.5	6.5	10.5	6.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	85	20	400
Recognition of Word Meanings	6.5	2.5	2.5	10.5	2.5	6.5	6.5	10.5	6.5	10.5	65	0	0
Remembering Information Read	6.5	6.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	10.5	10.5	85	20	400
Silent Reading Efficiency	6.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	2.5	81	16	256
Structural Recognition	10.5	10.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	6.5	89	24	576
Understanding Ideational Complexes	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	37	28	784
												=780	=6432

$$W = \frac{12\ D^2}{M^2\ (N)\ (N^2 - 1)}$$

$$= \frac{12\ (6432)}{100\ (12)\ (143)}$$

W = .45 (significant beyond .01 level)

r_s = .38

(3) "Would recommend you include a competency such as 'Being able to adjust rate of reading to material being read (including skimming).'"

(4) "Would recommend the following alterations to your current statements:

(a) Attitude Towards Reading add 'Understands the help experience offers in supporting meaningful reading.'

(b) Inference Making from Reading Selections replace 'correctly' with 'provide a reasonable interpretation of what is read.'

(c) Recognition of Word Meaning add 'uses context in trying to understand the meaning of words.'

(d) Structural Recognition add 'recognizes larger than word structural units.'"

Since the intent of this research is to operationalize a definition of reading maturity, the concerns expressed in Items 1 and 2 reflect the investigators' own concerns. Responses 3 and 4 indicate changes which should be included in a rewrite of these competencies to further strengthen them.

Saliency

Table 2 indicates the rank order and weighted mean averages by relative distribution of pupil outcomes for members of the reading faculty. Directions told participants "... the twelve cards contain proposed statements of what a child ought to be able to do as a result of the elementary reading instruction he received. We would like to know which of these outcomes you feel are of most importance, which are of average importance, and which are of least importance."

Weighted mean averages of 3.0 indicate either that all participants tend to rate this item of average importance or that three relatively equal-sized participant subgroups varied considerably in their ranking of an item. Items with weighted means above 3.5 indicate participant agreement with great numbers of participants ranking the items higher in importance.

An analysis of these data indicates that reading professors at this university express a unanimous belief that growth and development in the broad areas of attitude and comprehension are major indices of reading maturity as pupils exit from the elementary school. One professor, whose rankings could not be analyzed in the conventional manner, checked seven pupil outcomes as "most important":

-Attitude and Behavior Modification from Reading
-Attitude Toward Reading
-Critical Reading
-Inference Making from Reading Selections
-Recognition of Word Meanings
-Silent Reading Efficiency
-Understanding Ideational Complexes

Comparison of this professor's responses with those in Table 2 reveals that only one item fails to parallel the mean ranking calculated for the sample.

DISCUSSION

In order to formulate a broad and inclusive concept of reading maturity, a first step proposed in validating reading teacher competencies, three assumptions must be made:

(1) that agreement among groups of reading educators is possible;

(2) that pupil outcomes can be identified which are acceptable to reading educators as definitions of reading maturity; and,

(3) once identified, that pupil outcomes can be ordered as to saliency given various reading maturity points.

Insofar as the data collected from reading faculty at one major mid-western university is concerned, credence is given to the viability and acceptability of these assumptions. That is to say, (1) agreement among this faculty was possible and found to be significant, (2) pupil outcomes were identified which were generally acceptable as a definition of reading maturity, and (3) salient outcomes, that is, outcomes which were believed to be those which should be broad goals of the elementary schooling experience, were identifiable.

Probably one of the most interesting findings in Study One is the unanimity of agreement among this group of reading faculty regarding salient outcomes of good reading instruction at the termination of the elementary schooling process. While the areas identified (attitude and comprehension) are as expected in that these are areas which are currently prominent in professional thinking, the fact that agreement was found should not be dismissed lightly. Optimistically, if agreement was possible among this faculty, it may be found more generally within the profession. If true, future studies might explore the possibility of identifying a set of outcomes which represent an expert judgment as to what the outcomes of reading instruction ought to be. If such a study were conducted in a credible manner, the resulting framework might provide guidance to those persons developing instructional materials and tests. These people now, through the materials they develop, are establishing reading priority outcomes.

The focus of the second exploration became to further explore this area and determine (1) whether there was agreement between reading faculty members and public school teachers of reading, and regardless of these findings to determine, (2) whether there was agreement among public school teachers of reading as to salient outcomes.

METHOD-STUDY TWO

Subjects

Two groups of primary and intermediate reading teachers were the focus of study two (N=78). Group 1 consisted of classroom teachers in four schools

TABLE 2

Overall Rank Order and Weighted Mean Averages by Relative Distribution of Pupil Outcomes for Reading Professors (N=10)

SCALE	RANK ORDER	PUPIL OUTCOMES	WEIGHTED MEANS	SCALE
4.6	1	Critical Reading	4.6	4.6
4.4	2	Understanding Ideational Complexes	4.4	4.4
	3.5	Attitude and Behavior Modification from Reading	4.3	
4.2	3.5	Attitude Toward Reading	4.3	4.2
4.0	5	Inference Making From Reading Selections	4.0	4.0
3.8				3.8
3.6				3.6
3.4				3.4
3.2				3.2
3.0	6	Recognition of Word Meanings	3.0	3.0
2.8				2.8
2.6				2.6
2.4	7	Phonetic Recognition	2.4	2.4
2.2	8	Silent Reading Efficiency	2.2	2.2
2.0	9.5	Recognition of Literary Devices	2.0	2.0
	9.5	Remembering Information Read	2.0	
1.8	11	Structural Recognition	1.8	1.8
1.6				1.6
1.4				1.4
1.2	12	Oral Reading	1.2	1.2

within the Monroe School Corporation, Bloomington, Indiana (N=35). Teachers polled were those participating in the Professional Year Program, a field-based teacher preparation program operated by the Division of Teacher Education at Indiana University. Group 2 consisted of primary and intermediate reading laboratory teachers in Brevard County School Corporation, Melbourne, Florida (N=43). Teachers polled were those participating in an inservice workshop on updating the Brevard County Testing Program in Reading in February 1974. Reading Laboratory Teachers serve as remedial reading teachers and operate as reading resource teachers with the Brevard County schools.

Materials and Procedures

The same materials and procedures were used as in study one with the intermediate reading teacher groups. Primary reading teacher groups received a modified set of directions; namely, that they identify pupil outcomes appropriate for the termination of the primary school experience. Data were collected from each group in one setting.

RESULTS-STUDY TWO

Usable responses were received from all participants. Data received from primary reading teachers (N=52) and intermediate reading teachers (N=26) were analyzed separately and will be reported by subgroup within teacher groups.

Agreement

Kendall's Tau-Correlation Between Ranks (T) was computed to determine the extent of agreement that existed among the subgroup rankings of the twelve pupil outcomes. Tau was found to be .70 for the primary reading teacher subgroups and .38 for the intermediate reading teacher subgroups. The significance of tau was tested and found to be significant beyond the .01 level for the primary reading teacher subgroup comparison (Z=3.18) and beyond the .05 level for the intermediate reading teacher subgroup comparison (Z=1.72).

Acceptability

Participants in both groups were asked what additional goals or outcomes they believed ought to be considered as components of reading maturity. No participant in either the primary or intermediate groups offered additional statements or made alterations to the list of outcomes given. Acceptability of the pupil outcomes as written was assumed.

Saliency

Tables 3 and 4 indicate the rank order and weighted mean averages by relative distribution of pupil outcomes for primary and intermediate teacher participants respectively. Analysis of this data suggests that the following outcomes are salient (weighted mean average above 3.5) for primary teachers:

-Phonetic Recognition
-Recognition of Word Meaning

-Attitude Toward Reading
-Structural Recognition
-Understanding Ideational Complexes
-Remembering Information Read

In contrast, the following pupil outcomes are salient for intermediate reading teachers:

-Attitude Toward Reading
-Understanding Ideational Complexes
-Inference Making from Reading Selections

DISCUSSION

Data collected and analyzed from primary and intermediate teachers of reading add further credence to the viability and acceptability of the assumptions underlying the formulation of an operational definition of reading maturity. Specifically, primary and intermediate teachers of reading (1) were found to be in general agreement with their subgroup, (2) were found to be acceptant of pupil outcomes proposed as components of reading maturity, and (3) were able to identify salient constellations of components as outcomes of primary and intermediate reading instruction.

Pupil outcomes identified by primary teachers can be grouped into the general areas of *skills* (including phonetic, structural, linguistic, and contextual word recognition skills), *comprehension*, and *attitudinal development*. Intermediate teachers, on the other hand, de-emphasize word recognition skills, and stress instead the area of *comprehension* and *attitude*. This finding is interesting in that it mirrors the logical ordering of pupil outcomes as found in most reading materials in the classroom. This, of course, brings up an interesting speculation as to whether any procedure which rests on teacher beliefs will provide new direction for the profession. The research reported here does little to answer this question and, in fact, muddies the water by suggesting that teacher beliefs are conditioned responses and/or artifacts of the materials which they use. Future researchers might well explore this phenomenon among groups of teachers using materials which differ in underlying philosophy and goals.

The low ranking of oral reading by both primary and intermediate teachers seems to indicate that many critics may have misinterpreted the intent teachers have for using oral reading in the classroom.

CONCLUSIONS

Intermediate teachers of reading in Study Two, as did reading faculty members in Study One, identified the broad areas of attitude and comprehension as major indices of reading maturity for pupils as they exit from the elementary school reading program. While this general agreement is noticeable, there exists general disagreement as to what the appropriate level of pupil growth and development in these areas ought to be. Reading faculty members believe and expect higher levels of comprehension and attitudinal development than do the intermediate reading teachers sampled. This discrepancy was explored informally with both groups of participants. Reading faculty members were of the

TABLE 3

Overall and Subgroup Rank Order and Weighted Mean Averages by Relative Distribution of Pupil Outcomes for Primary Reading Teachers (N=52)

SCALE	RANK ORDER	PUPIL OUTCOMES	SUBGROUP RANK		WEIGHTED MEANS	SCALE
			MONROE	BREVARD		
4.6						4.6
	1.5	Phonetic Recognition	1.5	1.5	4.5	
4.4	1.5	Recognition of Wd Mng	1.5	1.5	4.5	4.4
4.2						4.2
4.0	3.5	Attitude Toward Rdg	4	4	3.9	4.0
	3.5	Structural Recognition	6	3	3.9	
3.8	5	Understanding Ideational	3	6	3.8	3.8
	6	Remembering Info Rd	5	5	3.7	
3.6						3.6
3.4						3.4
3.2						3.2
3.0	7.5	Inference Mkg frm Rdg	7	9	3.0	3.0
	7.5	Oral Reading	8	7.5	3.0	
2.8	9	Silent Rdg Efficiency	9	7.5	2.8	2.8
2.6						2.6
2.4						2.4
2.2						2.2
2.0	10	Critical Reading	10.5	10	2.0	2.0
	11	Attitude and Beh Mod fr Rdg	10.5	11	1.9	
1.8						1.8
	12	Recognition of Literary Dev	12	12	1.5	
1.6						1.6
1.4						1.4
1.2						1.2

TABLE 4

Overall and Subgroup Rank Order and Weighted Mean Averages by Relative Distribution of Pupil Outcomes for Intermediate Reading Teachers (N=26)

SCALE	RANK ORDER	PUPIL OUTCOMES	SUBGROUP RANK		WEIGHTED MEANS	SCALE
			MONROE	BREVARD		
4.6						4.6
4.4						4.4
4.2	1	Attitude Towards Rdg	1	2	4.2	4.2
4.0						4.0
3.8	2	Understanding Ideational	4.5	1	3.8	3.8
3.6	3	Inference Mkg frm Rdg	2	4	3.6	3.6
3.4						3.4
	4	Remembering Info Rd	9	3	3.1	
3.2	5.5	Attitude & Beh Mod fm Rdg	6.5	5	3.0	3.2
	5.5	Silent Rdg Efficiency	4.5	8.5	3.0	
3.0	7.5	Recognition of Wd Mng	3	10	2.9	3.0
	7.5	Critical Rdg	6.5	8.5	2.9	
2.8	7.5	Structural Recognition	8	6.5	2.9	2.8
2.6	10	Phonetic Recognition	10.5	6.5	2.6	2.6
2.4						2.4
2.2						2.2
2.0	11	Oral Reading	10.5	11	2.0	2.0
1.8						1.8
	12	Recognition of Literary	12	12	1.7	
1.6						1.6
1.4						1.4
1.2						1.2

belief that if higher level behaviors in comprehension and attitude were not developed and held the responsibility of the intermediate reading program, such behaviors would never be developed given the current handling of reading instruction at upper levels--a point seemingly well taken. Intermediate reading teachers, on the other hand, felt that the lack of needed reading program development at the junior and senior levels should not leave them the scapegoats of faulty professional practices--another point seemingly well taken. While consensus on this matter is probably unimportant in terms of the major thrust of research directed toward validating reading teacher competencies, this finding does point out the need for movement in many directions if the general improvement of reading instruction is to result.

What is far more interesting in terms of conclusions to be drawn from the research reported here is the fact that this set of explorations has identified a viable procedure for operationalizing the formulation of definitions of reading maturity at various levels. Research in the area of reading continues to verify the importance of the teacher in reading instruction (Bond and Dykstra, 1967; Harris and Morrison, 1969; Ramsey, 1962). Such research findings place a tremendous professional responsibility on reading teachers. It follows therefore that the professional teacher of reading must also take an active role in defining the criteria to be used and in operationalizing definitions of reading maturity. The research reported here provides educators with a viable set of procedures for initiating such teacher involvement and for continuing the active pursuit of research focused on the validation of reading teacher competencies.

In closing, we would be remiss if we did not point out the practical application of the research procedure explored in these studies. Two seem obvious. The procedure can and has been used to study and compare reading faculty members' perceptions of reading at the college level. The findings of such research serve to direct program development and can do much to strengthen preservice teacher education programs in reading. Secondly, public school personnel interested in identifying a vehicle for updating and strengthening their school's reading program can initiate this procedure to involve their faculties in actively exploring the issues involved in reading in their schools. This application of the procedure is currently being tested by the investigators.

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